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Belief in Astrology Declines: 12% Believe in Latest Survey

PRINCETON, N.J. — With Nancy Reagan's interest in astrology attracting widespread attention, a recent Gallup survey (in May) discovered that about one person in eight (12%) believes in astrology, while 80% say they do not, and 8% are undecided.

Americans appear considerably more skeptical about astrology today than they were a decade ago. A 1978 Gallup survey found 29% of adults claiming to believe in astrology, the belief that the movement of the heavenly bodies can influence human events.

Another recent Gallup survey (in April), however, revealed that as many Americans today (25%) as in 1975 (23%) regularly read an astrology column, and an even slightly greater number today (85% versus 76% in 1975) know the sign under which they were born.

This question was asked of 1,204 adults nationwide by telephone, conducted May 13-15:

Recently, Nancy Reagan's interest in astrology has been in the news. What are your own views on astrology — do you believe in it, or not?

Here are the results:

Belief in Astrology

Believe in it	12%
Don't believe in it	80
Don't know	8
	100%

The latest survey shows that women are more likely to believe in astrology than are men (16% vs. 9%), non-whites (20%) than whites (11%), and younger persons (under 30) (16%) than older (50 and older) (10%).

Interestingly, little difference is found on the basis of formal education, with 10% of college graduates saying they believe in astrology, compared to 11% of those who have attended but not graduated from college, and 14% among the non-college group.

It is also interesting to note that the percentage of believers is about as high among white evangelicals as among non-evangelicals, 10% and 12%.

Churchgoers as Likely as Non-Attenders To be 'Believers'

Apparently, for many, belief in astrology is not incompatible with traditional religious beliefs. The earlier (1975) survey showed that virtually as many churchgoers as non-churchgoers believed in astrology. This analysis was not made with the latest survey results.

Half of Teens Are 'Believers'

The percentage of believers is far higher among teenagers than among the adult population. Even though the scientific community generally dismisses astrology as being without scientific merit, a majority of teens (52%) said they believed in astrology. As with adults, younger women (58%) are more likely than young men (48%) to believe.

Teen Churchgoers Twice As Likely To Volunteer As Non-Attenders

America's tradition as a nation of volunteers is being carried on by a new generation of teen-agers, according to the results of the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

One teen in four (24 percent) is now giving his or her services by volunteering for charitable or social service activities such as helping the poor, the sick, or the elderly.

Teens who attend church regularly (31 percent) are about twice as likely as those who do not (16 percent) to report that they performed volunteer work in the past year. Undoubtedly, these efforts probably include some volunteer work directed by the church. Protestants (26 percent) are just as likely as Catholics (23 percent) to have been volunteers.

Most likely teens are following the examples set by their parents and other adult volunteers. Last year, about four adults in 10 (39 percent) said they were involved in volunteer activities. The trend of adult volunteering has been growing steadily since Gallup first studied the issue a decade ago, when it was found that 27 percent of adults were doing volunteer work.

Despite charges that young people today are too preoccupied with their material well-being, and that young women in particular are no longer interested in charitable or social work, two young men in 10 (19 percent) and three young women in 10 (30 percent) report that they performed volunteer work in the past year.

The spirit of volunteering is found among teens of all ages, with older teens, ages 16 and above (26 percent), being just as likely as those who are 13 to 15 (23 percent) to donate their services to worthy causes.

Above-average students (31 percent) are particularly likely to report that they are engaged in volunteer efforts. By comparison, below-average involvement is noted among those who say their schoolwork is only just average or below average (17 percent).

Geographically, teen volunteering is fairly divided throughout the country, with the highest incidence found in the South (27 percent) and the lowest in the Midwest (22 percent).

Whether a teen lives in a large city, the suburbs, or a small town or rural area apparently makes no difference in determining if volunteer opportunities exist and are being carried out.
Here is how the question was asked:

Are you involved in any charity or social service activities, such as helping the poor, the sick, or the elderly?

Here are the findings:

Involvement in Charitable Or Social Services

NATIONAL TEENS	24%
Attend church regularly	31
Do not attend regularly	16
Young men	19
Young women	30
Ages 13 to 15	23
Ages 16 to 17	26
Above-average students	31
Average and below	17
White-collar family background	27
Blue-collar family background	23
East	24
Midwest	22
South	27
West	24
Central cities	25
Suburbs	24
Non-metropolitan	24
Protestants	26
Catholics	23
Adults	39

The findings reported here are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 502 teenagers, 13 through 17, conducted between January 22 and February 6, 1988.

The findings reported for adults are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 504 adults, ages 18 and over, conducted in May 1987.

Keys to Fighting Drugs Seen as Educating Youth, Halting Supply

Beset by a rising flood of illegal drugs, Americans view anti-drug education of young people and efforts to halt foreign supplies as especially effective means of combating the epidemic.

Asked to choose among strategies for attacking the crisis, 47% say the key is educating young people, 35% emphasize interdiction of drugs, 6% stress treatment of drug users, and 13% favor all of these tactics equally.

All demographic groups in the survey choose education as the primary tool and place right behind it the need to keep drugs out of the country. Those under the age of 49 are slightly more likely than Americans over 50 to prefer education as the chief strategy; people over age 50 give greater weight to interdiction. Highest support for the drug treatment choice comes from blacks and people under 30.

Recent outbreaks of violence among gangs competing for the lucrative drug trade and various reports documenting the continuing influx of narcotics into this country have renewed attention on the immensity of the drug problem.

A central aspect of the current debate about fighting the crisis is whether it is caused more by the persistence of major drug suppliers or growing demand among American users. The subject received heightened attention during President Reagan's recent meeting with the president of Mexico. The survey indicates public attention is focused on both aspects of the problem and shows considerable support for a multi-faceted approach.

The following is the question asked and the findings by key groups:

In your opinion, which of the following would do the most to halt the drug epidemic in the U.S.: Helping drug users to obtain treatment to overcome their dependency, making it harder for illegal drugs to get into the country, or educating young people and other non-users about the dangers of drug abuse?

Strategies to Fight Drugs

	Educating young people	Harder to get drugs into country	All equally (Vol.)	Treatment for drug users	None (Vol.)	No opinion
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NATIONAL	47	35	13	6	1	2
Men	49	36	9	5	2	3
Women	45	35	16	7	1	2
18-29 years	52	29	9	11	1	1
30-49 years	49	32	16	6	1	1
50 & older	43	42	13	3	1	4
Whites	47	35	14	6	1	2
Blacks	44	36	5	11	1	5
College grads.	50	32	15	6	1	1
College inc.	43	31	20	6	1	2
H.S. grads.	49	40	11	5	1	2
Not H.S. grads.	46	36	4	9	6	2

NOTE: Totals exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

The latest findings are based on telephone interviews with 1,003 adults, 18 and older, conducted in scientifically selected localities across the nation March 8-12.

For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects should not exceed 4 percentage points in either direction. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Teens Taking Harder Stand Against Marijuana

America's teen-agers appear to be winning their own war against drugs. In record numbers, teens are turning away from marijuana and taking increasingly hard attitudes against it, according to the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

Teens have long identified drug abuse as the leading problem facing their generation, and, as a result, have led the opposition to legalizing its use. Currently, about nine teens in 10 (89 percent) say they are opposed to legalizing marijuana, while only 9 percent approve; 2 percent are undecided.

Similarly, three in four (77 percent) believe it would be wrong to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Only 21 percent of the teens think that such possession should not be treated as a criminal offense, while 2 percent are undecided.

Only 11% Have Ever Used Marijuana

As for saying "no" to drugs, teens now are doing just that. Only about one teen in 10 (11 percent) reports having ever used marijuana, and a scant 2 percent report use of the substance in the 30-day period preceding the interview.

Cocaine and crack are serious problems in some locales; but, nationwide, only 1 percent of the teens report experimenting with cocaine, and less than 1 percent have ever used crack. Since these experimenters usually have also tried marijuana, the overall drug experimentation incidence level for teens is 11 percent.

In 1978, when this series of questions was first asked by the Gallup Youth Survey, 39 percent of the teens reported they had tried marijuana, and 27 percent said they had used it in the previous month. Considering this high level of marijuana use, it is not surprising that only 42 percent of the teens in 1978 opposed the decriminalization of marijuana and only 62 percent were against its legalization.

As teens grow older, however, levels of experimentation rise and attitudes against marijuana soften slightly. Among those who are 16 or 17 years old, 17 percent have experimented with marijuana, and 7 percent say they used it in the past month. Among the older teens, opposition to decriminalization of marijuana drops to 74 percent, and legalization to 87 percent.

Geographically, recent marijuana use is greatest in the East (4 percent) and West (5 percent). Use has dropped to 1 percent in the South and Midwest. The South and West also lead the nation in opposition to legalization or decriminalization of marijuana.

Young men (14 percent) are slightly more likely than young women (9 percent) to have tried marijuana. Experimentation with the substance is about twice as great among academic underachievers (15 percent) as it is for those who are doing above-average work in school (8 percent).

Teens from white-collar and blue-collar households have about an equal chance to have experimented with marijuana or to be recent users of the substance. Experimentation is slightly higher in large cities (14 percent) and their suburbs (13 percent) than in small towns and rural areas (9 percent).

Here is how the questions were asked:

Have you ever tried marijuana (cocaine, crack)?

About how long ago did you last try marijuana?

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?

Do you think the possession of small amounts of marijuana should or should not be treated as a criminal offense?

The findings reported here are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 502 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted between January 22 and February 6, 1988.

Marijuana User Profiles

	Have used	Used past month	Oppose legalization	Oppose decriminalization
NATIONAL	11%	2%	89%	77%
Young men	14	2	88	76
Young women	9	2	91	78
Ages 13 to 15	7	1	91	79
Ages 16 to 17	17	7	87	74
Above-average students	8	1	88	78
Average and below	15	2	91	75
White-collar family background	12	2	88	78
Blue-collar family background	10	1	92	79
East	11	4	81	74
Midwest	9	1	91	78
South	11	1	94	80
West	15	5	89	74
Central cities	14	2	85	74
Suburbs	13	1	88	72
Non-metropolitan areas	9	1	92	81

Congress 88 Aims to Reach America's Unchurched

Fifteen thousand leaders in evangelism are expected to gather in Chicago this summer to learn how to reach the 90 million Americans who have no church affiliation, say the planners of Congress 88, A National Festival of Evangelism.

Taking place August 4-7 in the Rosemont Horizon and surrounding hotels near Chicago's O'Hare Airport, Congress 88 aims to enable the local church to reach out to those in its community with the invitation to receive Christ, to become a part of the church community and to live as Christian disciples in the world.

Church pastors, leaders and laity are invited to attend and participate in the 200 workshops, parable church presentations, forums and major plenary sessions during the four-day gathering. Major speakers include Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship, international evangelist Leighton Ford, General Eva Burrows of The Salvation Army, Chicago Archbishop Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, United Methodist Bishop Woodie White, and Progressive Baptist minister Harold Carter.

Alvin Illig of the National Catholic Evangelization Association, Robert Hamblin of the Southern Baptist Convention, and H. Eddie Fox of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship are also on the plenary program. George Gallup, Jr. whose 10-year old survey indicated that 41% of Americans are functionally uninvolved in any church community will update that survey at a plenary session followed by a workshop. (Note: For details on ordering a copy of the report based on this new survey, see page 6 of this issue of **EMERGING TRENDS**).

Among the other workshop leaders are representatives from Assemblies of God, American Baptist Church, Brethren in Christ, Christian Church, Churches of Christ, Church of God, Advent Christian, General Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical Covenant, Lutheran Church, Mennonite Church, Progressive Baptist, Presbyterian in America, Presbyterian (U.S.A.), Reformed Church in America, Catholic Church, Southern Baptist, The Salvation Army, and United Methodist.

Among the church-related groups offering workshops are American Bible Society, Bible Pathway, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Church Growth Center, Churches Alive!, Evangelism Explosion, Gospel Publishing Association, National Church Growth Research Center, Neighborhood Bible Studies and World Home Bible League.

"It strikes me that this is the first time that churches of such divergent views have been able to cooperate in evangelism," says Congress 88 President Grady Allison. "The participating church groups have put aside their differences to focus on their common faith in Jesus Christ in order to provide inspiration, instruction and motivation for the 375,000 local churches to bring Christ's message of hope, forgiveness, and salvation to the unchurched."

All Congress 88 programming relates to its four goals, which are to celebrate Jesus Christ, challenge churches to meet the human needs of society, unite to reach the 90 million unchurched, and reach out now to gather the harvest. Workshop topics cover church growth, tools for evangelism, equipping church members for evangelism, reaching youth, evangelizing in urban areas, the needs of the small church, church planning, witnessing, cross-cultural evangelism, the personal prayer life and commitment counseling.

Participating church groups are encouraged to hold kindred sessions prior to the opening session on Thursday evening. These sessions will allow a time of planning and fellowship for church groups to maximize their participation in the Congress. Likewise, time is allotted on Sunday morning for denominational worship services.

Registration and housing information is available from the Congress 88 office, P.O. Box 17093, Washington, D.C. 20041, (703) 471-1988. Registration discounts are offered to groups of ten or more.

How To Reach The Unchurched American

Millions of Americans remain unchurched, and many churches are continuing to experience losses in membership. What can be done to reach the unchurched American? How can present members be kept in the fold?

New light is shed on these pressing questions by the results of a just-completed major survey of the nation's adults, THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN — 1988. The focus of this survey is on the factors that cause people to leave the church — and those that cause them to return.

This survey, which reports updates of many of the questions asked in the landmark survey of a decade ago (THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN, 1978), compares and contrasts the attitudes of the churched and unchurched on social changes, lifestyle factors, basic religious beliefs and many other factors that are related to churchlessness.

Special attention in this 1988 survey has been given to the religious experience and needs of blacks and Hispanics in the United States.

The report, based on this important survey, provides full statistical details, comparisons with 1978 results, as well as a special section which offers practical steps to reach the unchurched in your community.

For good, solid, practical information that can help YOU in YOUR ministry — both in reaching new people and in deepening the commitment of the present members of your church — write for the new report, THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN — 1988.

To place your order write: The Princeton Religion Research Center, P.O. Box 628, Princeton, NJ 08542. Cost per copy is $29.00.

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